

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

CONTACT: OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
(916) 657-7202
(800) 735-2929 (TT/TDD)
(800) 735-2922 (Voice)



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CHP URGES TRAFFIC SAFETY ON MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND AND BEYOND

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) urges drivers to start a summer of safe driving this Friday night and make it last a lifetime.

“The three-day Memorial Day weekend is the traditional starting point for the summer driving period,” CHP Commissioner Dwight Helmick said today, “and summer has long been the most dangerous driving season of the year.

“We want this to be the safest summer ever,” he added, “but we need cooperation from every driver on the road in order to do it.”

The Commissioner offered some important points for drivers to follow – not only during the Memorial Day weekend but during all the weeks and weekends that follow.

“Start by buckling up,” Helmick said, “every time you get into a vehicle.

“It doesn’t matter how short the trip is,” he added, “or whether you’re traveling on a freeway or surface street. More fatal collisions occur on surface streets than on freeways, because of the greater likelihood of a head-on or broadside collision.

“Buckling up is your best protection against death or serious injury in a crash. This is protection that some people choose to ignore and it can cost them their life. In fact, in the fatal collisions that the CHP investigates, unbuckled victims would have survived more than half the time if they had just been wearing their safety belts,” the Commissioner said.

Safety belts should be used by all vehicle occupants, not just the driver. Children under four years of age regardless of weight or who weigh less than 40 pounds regardless of age, must ride in a federally approved child safety seat. “These seats are tailored to the special needs of small children and offer the best protection you can give your child in a car,” Helmick added.

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“And if you have a front passenger side air bag in your car, put your child in the back seat. Air bags are not designed to handle the special requirements of small children or child safety seats.”

“The next thing you can do to help protect yourself is to avoid getting behind the wheel if you’ve been drinking,” Commissioner Helmick said. “And don’t get into a vehicle if the driver has been drinking.”

“Under California law it is illegal for anyone with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 percent or higher to drive. Plan ahead and have a designated driver so everyone gets home safely,” he added.

The Commissioner also cautioned those planning to travel to the beach, mountains or other popular holiday locations to start early, allow extra time for the additional traffic and avoid driving long distances without proper rest. “Too many collisions are caused by people who are tired or impatient,” he said. “Don’t be one of these during the Memorial Day weekend – or at any other time.”

“Finally, keep an eye on your speedometer. Know the speed limit where you are driving and obey it. Remember that conditions such as heavy traffic or limited visibility should result in a speed that is safe even if it’s slower than the posted limit,” the Commissioner added.

For the CHP, Memorial Day weekend begins at 6:01 p.m. on Friday, May 23, and goes through midnight on Monday, May 26. These hours will be a CHP Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP). CHP Officers will be on the highway to ensure that it is free of speeders, drunk drivers and all others whose driving poses a risk to themselves or other motorists.

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